

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

VOTING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, this week on this floor, we are poised to witness something that has never happened before in living memory: an attempt to attack the core identity of the Senate by a sitting majority leader.

The senior Senator from New York once said nuking the filibuster would “turn what the Founding Fathers called the cooling saucer of democracy into the rubber stamp of dictatorship.” He said it would “make the country into a banana republic . . . a doomsday for democracy,” he said. Now, he wants to trigger that doomsday himself.

When I was majority leader, some of my own party urged me to break the Senate for our own party’s short-term gain. My answer was a simple word: “no.”

Less than 4 years ago, the senior Senator from Illinois said nuking the legislative filibuster “would be the end of the Senate as it was originally devised and created going back to our Founding Fathers.” Now, he wants the Senate to end on his watch.

The last time Senate Democrats were in the minority, 32 of them signed a letter demanding the legislative filibuster stay in place. Now, many of them say they want to break this institution. The excuses put forward for this behavior are entirely fake. The supposed justifications are simply false. The Senate Democratic leaders are trying to use a big lie to bully and berate their own Members into breaking their word, breaking the rules, and breaking the Senate.

We are going to spend all week sounding the alarm on the radical takeovers that some Democrats want to pull off. They want to silence millions of Americans and take over the Senate so they can take over elections so they can take over America.

Leading Democrats say they want to break the Senate because of the sinister anti-voting plot that is sweeping America. Of course, this is totally fake. It does not exist. The current control of Congress and the White House were decided in 2020 by the highest turnout in 120 years. Ninety-four percent of voters said voting was easy. More Americans say current voting laws are too lax than say they are too restrictive.

Confronted by the facts, the Democratic leader says they are, of course, irrelevant. He says the entire nuclear push is occasioned by what a few States did in 2021. This is utter nonsense. The Senator from New York has been publicly laying groundwork to nuke the Senate rules since back in 2019, before the 2020 election. More than a year before the 2020 election, the Democratic leader was openly flirting with nuking the Senate rules if he got the power so he would be able to

ram through bigger changes. Now, none of this was occasioned by what State legislatures did in 2021. This is actually a yearslong quest for power in search of a pretext.

Their hysterical attack on State laws are fake as well. The State of Georgia passed a voting law providing for more in-person early voting than New York provides. It allows for no-excuse absentee voting, which New York prohibits. If there was not a voting crisis in Democrat-run New York 6 months ago, there is no crisis in Georgia now. If Georgia is a banana republic today, then New York has been and still is a banana republic. There is zero logic here, zero consistency.

In the State of Texas, Democrats are hysterical because the State rolled back some unusual COVID-specific exceptions to their prior procedures, such as universal drive-through voting and 24-hour voting. So if the bar for voting rights now requires the possibility of voting in person at 3 a.m., how many blue States in America meet that bar? Neither of these things existed in Texas before 2020, and neither widely exists in blue States.

Every hysterical claim that our democracy is in crisis rings hollow. More Americans today say that President Biden’s election was legitimate—now listen to this—than said the same thing about the prior President in late 2017. More Americans today say that President Biden’s election was legitimate than said the same about the prior President in late 2017. Yet Democrats are trying to use their fake hysteria to justify breaking Senate rules so they can seize control of elections in all 50 States. That is what they are up to.

Historically, the Senate has taken up elections legislation on a careful, bipartisan basis. We have made sure not to trample on the rights of voters and the proper roles of local officials.

In 2002, we passed the Help America Vote Act by a vote of 92 to 2—92 to 2. Chris Dodd and I authored that bill. Interestingly enough, the only dissenting votes came from then-Senator Hillary Clinton and the current Democratic leader, CHUCK SCHUMER. Ninety-two to two.

Well, that is how you pass election reform if there are actual issues that need tackling. You do it carefully; you do it thoughtfully; bipartisan committee work; regular order. Our colleagues aren’t doing anything like that. They are trying to ram through a sweeping, partisan legislation that they first drafted and introduced in its first iteration back in 2019.

Democrats say they are concerned about efforts to disempower the appropriate local elections officials. Well, it is actually their bills that would disempower local officials, by Washington Democrats appointing themselves the entire country’s board of elections on steroids.

Democrats say they are concerned about overturning election results.

Well, it is their bills that would overturn election results, overruling the commonsense voting laws that citizens across the country pick for their own States.

A case in point: The Democrats’ latest bill would force the entire country to adopt two practices—same-day registration and no-excuse absentee voting—that the citizens of New York State had as ballot measures last November. Deep-blue New York rejected them both. So you have to ask yourself, why are Washington Democrats refusing to accept the decision of New York voters? Why are they trying to set aside these election results and overturn the people’s will?

Our Democratic colleagues also talked about a so-called voting rights bill. This is a bill to turn the partisan Attorney General into a national elections czar. The Attorney General would no longer have to sue States to win in court; he could end up doing an end run around the legal system and push States around without having to persuade a judge first. I am sure our Democratic colleagues would have reacted well if Republicans had tried to break Senate rules so that Bill Barr could micromanage elections in blue States. I am sure that would have gone swimmingly on their side of the aisle.

But, ultimately, the issues at stake this week run even deeper than this fake hysteria, even deeper than voting laws. Breaking the Senate itself and nuking the filibuster would cause a massive political power outage for many millions of American citizens, for entire States.

So the filibuster is not just about what bills are blocked; it is also the sole feature that gives millions of Americans any voice at all in the legislation that does pass whenever there is one-party control. Annual appropriations, government funding bills, the NDAA, rescue packages like the CARES Act—all of them could be done on a one-party basis, thereby eliminating the influence of every State in America represented by a Member of the minority.

For decades, both Senators and citizens have been able to take for granted that everybody gets a voice, even when they don’t have divided government. If this unique feature of the Senate is blown up, millions and millions of Americans’ voices will cease to be heard in this Chamber—a radical Senate takeover, for a radical elections takeover, for a radical takeover of our Nation’s future.

What the Democratic leader wants to do would not protect our democracy or our system of government. It would destroy a key feature of American Government forever, and the Senators on both sides know it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I listened carefully to the Republican leader’s statement about the institutions of the Senate, the traditions of the